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The Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam has been discussing with the United States Government during the past week arrangements for the new and wider meetings in Paris which would enable the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam to send its representatives to Paris to engage in direct and serious talks on the substance of a settlement for an honorable and secure peace in Viet-Nam.

As a result of these discussions, the United States Government has provided us with the following statement on the points of paramount concern to the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam.

This statement is designed to answer the questions which have been raised by the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam about the arrangements for a new and wider meeting in Paris.

Prior to the President's announcement of October 31 of the stopping of bombing against North Viet-Nam, agreement had been reached in Paris between North Vietnamese and US negotiators that a meeting on the substance of a peaceful settlement in Viet-Nam should be promptly convened in Paris.

This agreement was preceded by discussions in which US spokesmen made clear that the stopping of bombing and the holding of such a meeting would not be possible without agreed provision for the participation of the Republic of Viet-Nam as a separate delegation forming, with the US delegation, one side of the meeting. US negotiators made clear to Hanoi that it might bring on its side of the table any persons it wished.

The North Vietnamese representatives in Paris accepted this proposal in principle, and indicated

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that they would bring to the meeting representatives of the so-called National Liberation Front.

This was and is the sole agreement concerning representation in the new Paris meetings. In the discussions, it was made clear throughout that, whoever Hanoi chose to bring on its side, the arrangement involved no element of recognition whatever. The US Government has at all times regarded the so-called National Liberation Front as an organization controlled by North Viet-Nam. The NLF is not in any sense a separate entity, much less a government.

In the light of these facts, the arrangements agreed in Paris provide in essence for a two-sided meeting. Hanoi clearly understands that our side will be constituted as separate delegations of the Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States.

The status of the Republic of Viet-Nam's representatives is thus already defined. If Hanoi fulfills its repeated undertakings to enter seriously into the Paris meeting--undertakings repeated throughout the contacts between North Vietnamese and American representatives in Paris--the practical fact is that the North Vietnamese delegation must talk directly and seriously with the Republic of Viet-Nam delegation.

The agreements leave it entirely open how the Republic of Viet-Nam and US delegations will address the other side. We wish to make clear that there was never the slightest doubt that, consistent with our view of the nature of the so-called National Liberation Front, we would regard all the representatives on the other side of the table--whatever they might claim for themselves--as representatives of a single side, that of Hanoi, and for practical purposes as a single delegation.

On the roles to be played in the Paris meetings by the Republic of Viet-Nam and the United States delegations, it is clearly understood that the Republic of Viet-Nam delegation would play a leading role, as was explicitly affirmed in the Honolulu communique of July. The consultations between the GVN and US have likewise made clear that the Republic of Viet-Nam should take the lead and be the principal spokesman on all matters which are of immediate and direct concern to South Viet-Nam. Thus, this practical division of labor will reinforce the fact that North Viet-Nam must talk directly and seriously to the Republic of Viet-Nam.

The new Paris meetings will be expected to explore all avenues relevant to a peaceful settlement in Viet-Nam. They will start with a clean slate. The sole agreements that have been reached in the earlier Paris talks between North Vietnamese and US representatives have concerned the cessation of bombing, the convening of a new meeting, and the circumstances required to achieve and maintain these.

In the new meetings, the US delegation will operate in the closest cooperation with the Republic of Viet-Nam, and in continuing consultation with the nations that have contributed military forces to the defense of South Viet-Nam.

The substantive position of the American Government will continue to be based on the Manila Communique and on other publicly stated positions. In particular, there has been no change whatever, and will be no change, in the position of the US Government toward a so-called "coalition" in South Viet-Nam. We have repeatedly made clear that our objective is that the South Vietnamese people determine their own future without external interference. The imposition of any coalition government would be at variance with this principle.

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